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THE FISH.



BY

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ONE PENNY





## *The Fish.*

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Who has not seen a fish ? It is an object more or less familiar to us all. A vast number of our countrymen spend their lives as fishermen, numbers more in disposing of the fish when brought to land.

In small fishing villages, it is the chief food of the inhabitants. There can be scarcely any in our country, who do not partake of it more or less. To some of these a few words about the fish may be interesting, and with God's blessing us-ful : and my desire in writing them is, that the sight of a fish may henceforth awaken in the hearts of my readers some

such thoughts as it kindled in those of the early Christians.

With them, the sign of a fish was in much use, because, as we shall see presently—it served as an emblem of their faith.

It was sometimes painted over the door of their houses, to show their fellow Christians where they might find rest and refreshment in their travels.

How welcome this sign must have been in those days, when the followers of Jesus were treated with scorn and derision and often shamefully persecuted, so that they would hardly dare to seek for shelter with perfect strangers, but the sign of a fish would assure them that within those walls they would meet with kindness and sympathy from those of “like precious faith” with themselves.

The figure of a fish may also be seen to this day on the walls of the Catacombs at Rome; those immense passages underground, which were used at that time for the burial of the dead.

There, the living Christians used to meet for worship, and often even took up their abode in order to escape from their cruel persecutors; and when recording on the walls the death—it might be the martyrdom—of some of their little band, they generally introduced the figure of a fish into the inscription, and thus have the resting places of the christians been distinguished from those of the heathen.

To the latter it was an unmeaning sign, but to the Christians it spoke of the Saviour who had bought them with His precious blood, and whom they loved better

than life itself, and this is why —because the letters of the Greek word for fish, give the initials of the following sentence :—  
**JESUS CHRIST SON OF GOD SAVIOUR.\***

The faith of a christian is summed up in these words, full of comfort now, as then, for Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (Heb. xiii. 8.)

I propose to take the initials of this Greek word (ΙΧΘΥΣ) first to bring out from God’s word the great truths, (so highly prized by

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\* NOTE.—Without knowing a word of Greek this can be seen at a glance, when placed side by side with the English.

Ι-ησους	(I.-ēsous)	Jesus
Χ-ριστος	(Ch.-ristos)	Christ
Θ-εον	(Th.-eon)	of God
Υ-ιος	(U.-ios)	Son
Σ-ωτηρ	(S.-ōtēr)	Saviour
ΙΧΘΥΣ.	(ICHTHUS.)	FISH.

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these early christians,) touching our Lord's Person, His Divinity, and His Humanity.

And secondly, I propose to take the initials of our English word fish, to show how we may be partakers of His one great salvation.

JESUS, the first word we have, means Saviour in Greek, as Joshua or Jehoshua does in Hebrew.

Scripture names were generally given in allusion to some circumstance connected with the child's birth, family, position or intended career; and so it was with our Lord—"Thou shalt call His name JESUS," said the angel of the Lord to Joseph before His birth, "*for* He shall save His people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.)

This He did by dying for them, as He Himself tells us. "I lay down my life for the sheep," (John x. 15.) "He was wounded for

*our* transgressions ; He was bruised for *our* iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with *His* stripes we are healed." (Isa. liii. 5, see also Eph. v. 25, & 1 Pet. iii. 18.)

In Jesus we "behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," (John i. 29.) Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is *none other name* under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

CHRIST—the second word means anointed in Greek, as Messiah or Messiahah does in Hebrew.

Scripture tells us how prophets, priests, and kings, were anointed in token of the Spirit of the Lord entering into them, and fitting them for their office—(see 1. Kings xix. 16. Ex. xxix. 21. 1 Sam. x. 1, 6, 10.)

Jesus is presented to us in the threefold character of Prophet, Priest, and King: and he was *filled* with the Spirit, (see Isa. xi. 2. with John iii. 34; Isa. lxi. 1; with Luke iv. 18; Acts. iv. 27; Ps. ii. 2. and xlv. 7. with Heb. i. 9.) Not only was Jesus conceived by the Holy Ghost, (Luke i, 35,) but at His baptism John “Saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him,” (John i. 32,) and Peter tells, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy “Ghost, and with power.” (Acts x. 38.)

Truly Jesus was proved to be *the* CHRIST, (John i. 41,) and “Whoever believeth that Jesus *is the* CHRIST, is born of God,” (1. John v. 1.)

SON of GOD is the third name in our emblem of the fish, and in

Scripture we have abundant proof that truly Jesus is SON of GOD, as well as Son of Man.

The angel Gabriel when announcing to Mary that she was to be the Mother of our Lord spake thus, "That Holy Thing  
" that shall be born of thee shall  
" be called the SON of GOD," (Luke i. 35.)

At His baptism, and on the mount of transfiguration, God the Father testified of Him in these words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matt. iii. 17. and xvii. 5.) His disciples worshipped Him as Son of God. (Matt. xiv. 33. and xvi. 16, John i. 49. and xi. 27.) The devils acknowledged Him to be so. (Matt. viii. 29; Mark iii. 11; Luke iv. 41); and the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus on the cross



bore witness to the same fact, (Matt. xxvii. 54.

To the vital importance of this truth, the Holy Ghost testifies in such passages as the following, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is *the* Christ, the SON of GOD: and that believing ye might have life through His Name," (John xx. 31, see also John iii. 36 and 1 John v. 11.)

Jesus was God "manifest in the flesh," (1 Tim. iii. 16, Matt. i. 23.) Let us never lose sight of His Divinity, for as man only, His blood could not atone for sin, but His Divinity makes His sacrifice of *infinite value*.

The finite cannot *understand* the infinite, but by faith we can grasp the *fact*, that Christ's sacrifice is *all sufficient* to secure the salvation of every poor sinner who

believes on Him. "He that hath the Son *hath* life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John v. 12.)

SAVIOUR—is the last word from our emblem; and as we have seen it is the meaning of the first word "Jesus" the name given to the Son of God when He "came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. i. 15.)

Amongst the numerous passages speaking of Jesus as SAVIOUR I will but point to two or three. Here are the words of the angel when announcing His birth to the shepherds at Bethlehem, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a SAVIOUR, which is Christ the Lord," (Luke ii. 11. "The Father sent the Son, to be the SAVIOUR of the world," (1 John iv. 14.) We are taught to look for the return of "th

SAVIOUR, the Lord Jesus Christ, (Phil. iii. 20, Titus ii. 13, and 1 Thess. i. 10,) and meanwhile God bids us “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and SAVIOUR Jesus Christ,” (2 Peter iii. 18.)

See how much was implied by this emblem of a fish to the early christians.

Do you, dear Reader, love the Lord Jesus Christ as they did? Do you know Him as *the* Anointed Saviour, the Son of God?

This leads me,—Secondly—to show, as I proposed, from the initials of our English word fish, how we may become partakers of this one great salvation—thus

F...	...	...	Faith.
I, or J...	...	...	Jesus.
S...	...	...	Saviour.
H	...	...	Heaven.

Faith in Jesus as *your* Saviour will not only save you from Hell but lead you to Heaven. Yea, if a believer you are even now in a Haven of safety; for he that is *in Christ*, is as safe as Noah was in the ark, or as a tempest-tossed vessel or fishing smack, when it has reached the Harbour.

Faith, then, (as seen by some of the texts already quoted,) is the means by which we lay hold of the salvation, that God in His great mercy has provided for us "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*" (Act xvi, 31.) "By grace are ye saved through *faith* and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephes. ii, 8, 9.)

And what is faith? It is simply *believing* God's word, His record concerning His Son; (

John v, 10, 11) trusting in the finished work of Christ for salvation, and thus "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," (Rom. v, 1.) whence follows "fruit into holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Rom. vi, 22.)

Should you, dear reader, be one of those engaged in the fisheries around our coast, subject to toil, and often exposed to danger, may the Lord the Spirit specially bless to your soul these thoughts on fish, and make your earthly calling a *help*, rather than a hindrance to your heavenly calling—may the fish so constantly before your eyes be used of God to lead you to Jesus, if as yet you are a stranger to Him: but if you already know and love Him, may it help you to think oftener of Him.

Remember how, when on earth He chose poor fishermen for His disciples and friends, (Matt. iv, 18,-22, and John xv, 15,) sent them forth to disciple others, and laid down His life for them, and for you.

As He sat and taught in the boat of the poor fishermen of Galilee so would He now sit and teach you, not indeed in bodily presence, and by word of mouth but by His written word, and by His Holy Spirit applying that word to your heart, and dwelling in you, making you in your turn a help to others.

How many passages there are in God's word which speak of fish from which *much* may be learnt; in this little book I can but allude to a few, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, (Matt. xiv, 15,-21 and xv, 32—38.) Th

miraculous draughts of fishes, (Luke v, 1—11, and John xxi.) And the fish with the tribute money in its mouth, brought to Peter's hook. (Matt. xvii, 27.) What teaching is there in these Scriptures, and how they bring out the attributes of our Divine Lord and Master.

They tell of His Almighty power, they tell of His bounteous compassion and love. They point to Him as Governor of the world of whom it is said, "Thou hast put all things under His feet...the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea," (Psalm viii. 8, with Heb. ii. 8,) and they show how He would have men caught in the Gospel net, and how He will work with His people for the salvation of souls.

A prayerful study of the passages relating to fish, will not only interest you as fishermen, but will assuredly bring blessing to the soul.

As on catching fish, (if you are a fisherman) depends your livelihood in this world, so, on having Jesus for your Saviour depend your *eternal* welfare; and as eating the fish nourishes the body so does feeding on Jesus nourish and preserve the life of the soul (John vi, 50, 51, 58, 63.) An how are you to feed on Jesus but in the written word? May you be led to dig more into this mine of wealth, and as you become possessed of its treasures, learn to prize it more and more, so that it may be said of you, as of a valued friend of mine, "The food of his soul is the word of God."

But whoever you may be, de



reader, or whatever your calling, whether you are engaged in catching, selling, or buying fish: whether you see it in your net, the market, the shop, or on your dinner table, may it speak to you, as it did to the early Christians; and ever kindle in your heart a warm glow of grateful love to

JESUS CHRIST the SON of GOD, *your* SAVIOUR.

In Hædron symbolon

Emblem of Purity  
and the Truth  
of the embodiment







